

HEALTH  
AT  
1949

# ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

## MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

for the year ended December 31st, 1949.

To The Thetford Borough Council.

Madam Mayor, Aldermen and Councillors,

I have the honour to submit my second Annual Report on the sanitary circumstances, health and vital statistics of your Borough for the year 1949.

The Report is an Ordinary Report, and is written in conformity with suggestions contained in the Ministry of Health Circular No. 2/50 dated 25th January, 1950.

This year shows a considerable drop in the birth rate which is now below the National Rate and has decreased by three births per 1,000 of the population. The Death Rate is slightly lower than the National figure but is above the figure for Norfolk. Once again the death rate of children under one year of age is high but on further analysis it will be seen three of the deaths occurred within four weeks and were inevitable. Nevertheless, I shall not be happy until the figure compares more favourably with that of England and Wales which has reached a new low record.

Once again no action has been taken under the National Assistance Act, 1948, Section 47.

The main event of the year took place in May when work started on the general sewerage scheme for the Borough. It is to be hoped that the term "vault" will soon disappear from the Annual Reports for ever and that "pail closets" will follow and become a topic of historical interest only.

Although only 22 new houses were occupied during the year, the immediate prospects at the end of December appeared to be good. The new houses which were occupied were let, in the main, to tenants who lived in sub-standard dwellings and to families living in over-crowded premises.

There are still too many families waiting to be re-housed but it should be borne in mind that the rents of these new houses must be kept within reasonable limits, otherwise, we shall find ourselves in a position where families would rather live in insanitary conditions in order to be able to balance their budget and have their children adequately fed and clothed.

### Section A. STATISTICS.

Area—7,096 acres.

Registrar-General's estimate of the population at mid-year—4,388.

Number of inhabited houses according to the rate book—1,399.

Number of persons per house—3.1.

Density—1.6 persons per acre.

Rateable value—£19,557.

Product of Penny Rate—£76 5s.

### Extracts from Vital Statistics 1949.

#### BIRTHS.

##### Live Births.

	Total	Male.	Female.
Legitimate ... ..	64	33	31
Illegitimate ... ..	5	1	4
	69	34	35

Rate per 1,000 of population—15.7.

##### Stillbirths.

	Total.	Male.	Female.
Legitimate ... ..	—	—	—
Illegitimate ... ..	—	—	—

Rate per 1,000 of the population—Nil.

Rate per 1,000 total (live and still) births—Nil.

#### DEATHS.

	Total	Male.	Female.
	62	31	31

Death Rate per 1,000 of the population ... .. 11.2 (corrected).

Natural increase of population (excess of births over deaths) ... .. 7

Deaths from puerperal causes:—

	Rate per 1,000 total births
Puerperal Sepsis ... .. Nil	—
Other Maternal causes ... .. Nil	—

### INFANT MORTALITY.

#### Deaths of Infants under 1 year of age.

	Total.	Male.	Female.
Legitimate ... ..	4	3	1
Illegitimate ... ..	—	—	—
	4	3	1

Infant Mortality Rates (Deaths of Infants under one year per 1,000 live births):—

Legitimate only ... .. 62.5

Illegitimate only ... .. —

General ... .. 58.0

The corresponding rate for England and Wales is 32.

### Causes of Death of Infants Under One Year.

Sex.	Age.	Cause of Death.
Male ... ..	1 day	Atelectasis and Prematurity.
Male ... ..	2 weeks	Anaemia.
Female ... ..	4 weeks	Hydrocephalus and Spina Bifida.
Male ... ..	7 weeks	Shock and Exhaustion.
		Congenital Pyloric Stenosis.

### DEATHS FROM CERTAIN SELECTED CAUSES.

Cancer (all ages) ... ..	12
Measles (all ages) ... ..	Nil
Whooping Cough (all ages) ... ..	Nil
Diarrhoea (under 2 years of age) ... ..	Nil





SECTION B.—SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA.

(1). Water.

A further extension of the water main was carried out during the year to serve a section of the new Housing Estate off London Road.

Practically all the houses in Thetford have a piped water supply, either direct into the house or to pipes within the curtilage of the house.

There was no shortage of water during the year, although it was one which carried the longest period of drought conditions recorded locally. Naturally this drought period reflected itself in the levels of the water. It was interesting to note however that as soon as the break in drought conditions occurred the pumping level quickly rose to its normal reading.

Water was again submitted to the Public Analyst for both chemical and bacteriological examination.

Remarks. "The organic quality of this water is very good and its bacteriological condition excellent. There is no sign of pollution and the water is very suitable for drinking and general purposes."

(2). Drainage and Sewerage.

The year under review saw the commencement of work on a general sewerage scheme for Thetford. The Contractors commenced work in May on a scheme to serve the whole of the town. By the end of the year good progress was made. The gravitation area was almost completed and a large amount of work has been carried out at the disposal works and area pumping stations.

Closet Accommodation.

The only change during the year were the addition of 22 W.C.s for new houses. Other changes have been the conversion of 4 vaults to pails. These alterations now give :—W.C.s 381. Pails 681. Vaults 320.

(3). Public Cleansing.

The collection of house refuse remains the same as in previous years.

Sanitary Inspection of the Area.

No. of inspections for nuisances	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	401
No. of informal notices served	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	26
No. of Statutory Notices served	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	3
No. of Prosecutions	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
No. of Nuisances abated as a result of notices served				...	...	...	...	24
No. in hand at end of year	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2

SECTION C.—HOUSING.

A large number of housing inspections were carried out during the year, and certain improvements made. 22 additional new houses were completed and occupied, 4 further houses were in an advanced stage of construction and would be completed very early 1950. A further 16 houses had been allocated by the Ministry and the Contract let. Foundation work was commenced during 1949. Owing to the very large list of applicants for Council Houses no licences were allocated for private building.

SECTION D.—MILK.

(a) As in previous years samples were taken and tested by lactometer.

(b) Meats and other Foods.

A considerable quantity of meat and other foods was examined during the year, resulting in the following list of food being condemned as unfit for human consumption.

Butter	...	...	...	10 lbs.
Margarine	...	...	...	3½ lbs.
Bacon	...	...	...	31 lbs.
Cheese	...	...	...	78 lbs.
Frozen Mutton	...	...	...	30 lbs.
Pork	...	...	...	8 lbs.
Pigs Plucks	...	...	...	17 lbs.
Corned Beef	...	...	...	12 lbs.
Fish	...	...	...	84 lbs.
Chicken (tinned)	...	...	...	29 lbs.
Sugar	...	...	...	405 lbs.
Dried Peas	...	...	...	130 lbs.
Tinned Foods	...	...	...	252 tins.
Tomato Puree	...	...	...	4100 lbs.

SECTION E.—PREVALENCE OF, AND CONTROL OVER, INFECTIOUS AND OTHER DISEASES.

The total number of cases of Infectious Diseases notified during the year was 48 compared with 262 cases in 1948, 45 in 1947 and 93 in 1946.

The total number of each disease notified was as follows :—

(Figures in brackets represent the number notified during 1948)

Measles	...	...	...	3	(189)
Whooping Cough	...	...	...	16	(61)
Pneumonia	...	...	...	22	(6)
Dysentery	...	...	...	—	(1)
Scarlet Fever	...	...	...	1	(3)
Puerperal Pyrexia	...	...	...	—	(1)
Erysipelas	...	...	...	2	(1)
Jaundice	...	...	...	3	(—)
Food Poisoning	...	...	...	1	(—)
				48	(262)

One case of food poisoning was notified in a man aged 70 who was taken ill whilst travelling through Thetford by train. On investigation it was found that he had eaten some tinned meat which had been opened the previous day. It was impossible to arrange for bacteriological investigation. The man fully recovered in 24 hours.

It will be seen that there was no epidemic of measles or whooping cough this year which accounted for the large number of infectious diseases last year. In contrast it will be seen that this year the number of cases of pneumonia have increased greatly, giving a case rate of 5.0 per 1,000 of the population, compared with a national

rate of 0.80. 50% of the cases occurred in the first two months of the year. It is interesting to note that the vast majority of the cases occurred in houses which could not be considered to be damp or otherwise insanitary. No case occurred following any of the other notifiable infectious diseases, e.g. measles or whooping cough. It is, however, a pleasant fact to note that no deaths were recorded. This is undoubtedly due to the modern advances in chemotherapeutic methods.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES NOTIFIED DURING 1949.

Disease	0—1	—3	—5	—10	—15	—25	—45	—65	Over 65	Totals
Measles ... ..	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	3
Pncumonia ... ..	2	1	3	2	—	1	8	3	2	22
Whooping Cough ... ..	1	5	4	4	1	—	1	—	—	16
Erysipelas ... ..	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	2
Jaundice ... ..	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	1	3
Scarlet Fever ... ..	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
Food Poisoning ... ..	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
TOTAL	3	7	7	8	2	1	10	6	4	48

TUBERCULOSIS.

The following are the number of cases on the register on 31st December, 1948:—

		Males	Females	Total
Pulmonary ... ..	...	12	9	21
Non-Pulmonary ... ..	...	8	11	19
		—	—	—
		20	20	40
		—	—	—

The following are the number of cases on the register on 31st December, 1949:—

		Males	Females	Total
Pulmonary ... ..	...	11	7	18
Non-Pulmonary ... ..	...	8	7	15
		—	—	—
		19	14	33
		—	—	—

The table shows the age and sex distribution of notified cases and deaths from tuberculosis during the year.

Age Periods	New Cases				Deaths			
	Pulmonary		Non-Pulmonary		Pulmonary		Non-Pulmonary	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
0—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
5—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
15—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
25—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
35—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
45—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
55—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—
65 and upwards	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS	2	1	3	—	1	—	—	—

In conclusion I would like to thank the Chairman and Members of the Public Health Committee for the continued support and encouragement which they have given me throughout the year.

I am again indebted to Mr. L. G. Howell for his loyal co-operation.

I have the honour to be  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

C. WARDEN ORR,  
Medical Officer of Health.